

**The Hindu- 15- October-2023**

# Sikkim's fallen dam haunts India's dreams in Bhutan

**Rahul Karmakar**  
**Suhasini Haidar**  
GANGTOK/THIMPHU

The Chungthang dam of Sikkim Urja's 1,200-MW Teesta-III hydroelectric project on the Teesta river gave way on October 4, leading to the death of at least 94 people in the downstream areas of Sikkim and West Bengal.

The devastation has refreshed worries over two of three Indian-assisted, under-construction mega hydropower projects in Bhutan – the 1,200-MW Punatsangchhu Stage-I (Puna-I) and the 1,020-MW Punatsangchhu Stage-II (Puna-II). These projects, and the 660-MW Kholong-



At least 94 persons died after a dam gave way in Sikkim.

chu, are estimated to cost ₹21,637.28 crore, funded by India, benefiting northern and eastern States.

Doubts were raised in February, when the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) uploaded a note on the projects completed, being constructed, and pursued under a 2006 agreement on cooperation

in the field of hydroelectric power signed between the two countries. The status was updated in August, with hardly any changes.

The CEA note on Puna-I, started in 2008 and expected to be commissioned in 2024-25, said: "Project commissioning is being delayed due to movement/subsidence of right bank hill mass in the dam area. Treatment/stabilisation of the right bank and completion of dam work under progress. The option of providing a barrage in the upstream and abandoning of the dam is being studied."

**CONTINUED ON**  
» **PAGE 7**

I/150522/2023

The Hindu- 15- October-2023

## Sikkim's fallen dam haunts India's dreams

On the Puna-II, targeted for commissioning in 2023-24, the note said: "Poor geological strata and shear zone being encountered at left bank and foundation of dam and HRT [head race tunnel, a tunnel connecting water intake at dam site to power house for generation of hydro electricity]. Remedial measures are under progress."

According to the CEA, the HRT for Puna-I was completed in June 2015, while 99.53% of the dam excavation and 98.05% of the underground powerhouse have been completed. In the case of Puna-II, 99.73% of the HRT and 97.49% of the concrete dam have been completed.

An Assam-based hydrologist, under condition of anonymity, said the rethink on the two Puna projects is likely to entail an expensive design change. Pushing for dams reflects the failure of several Indian agencies in comprehensively assessing the fragile Himalayan geology, similar to Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh flanking Bhutan.

These agencies are the Central Water Commission, the Geological Survey of India, and WAPCOS, apart from the CEA. Earlier known as Water and Power Consultancy Services (India) Limited, WAPCOS is a consultancy service provider under the administrative control of the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

"Punatsangchhu has been a story of disaster with international landslide experts like Dave Petley having pointed out it was a blunder to start a dam at the location that seems to be on the debris of past landslides," environmental activist and water expert Himanshu Thakkar said.

Indian government officials said no final decision has been taken on the Bhutan projects, but experts are studying the "technical aspects" of the projects. "Geological aspects are being reviewed by experts for the dam option," an official said.

I/150522/2023

The Tribune- 15- October-2023

# State govt admitted Haryana has share in water, says Channi

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 14

Amid Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann challenging the Opposition parties for a debate on the contentious SYL issue, former CM Charanjit Channi today said the AAP government has acknowledged that Haryana has a share in the water.

Challenging CM Mann to clear its stand, Channi, referring to the order on the SYL by the Supreme Court, said the state government has admitted in court that Haryana had share in the water.

Amid heightened politics over the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal, Channi said on Saturday that it was for the first time that any government in Punjab had stated before the apex court that Haryana

## AAP QUIETLY ALLOWING SYL SURVEY: SAD

**Chandigarh:** The Shiromani Akali Dal claimed on Saturday that Bhagwant Mann government was quietly going ahead with a fresh survey of the SYL canal. In a tweet, SAD chief Sukhbir Badal claimed that the government had included the SYL survey as one of the topics uploaded on e-portal of the Water Resource Department. TNS

had a share in its water.

Quoting the apex court orders, the former CM said, "Learned counsel for the State of Punjab did endeavour to persuade us that with the passage of time, the availability of water has become less and thus, the share of Haryana being purportedly less and that can be satisfied by other measures. We may note that it has already been settled that the execution does not deal with the allocation of water."

Channi said, "This means Punjab is willing to give

water, but a lesser amount as the availability of water is less. It has agreed to give water to Haryana through other measures. Where is the water when Punjab itself is turning into a desert?"

He said, "If the CM is blaming Congress for SYL, the stand taken by the state government is more worrisome. The state has not objected to the survey." Channi said Mann had hit out at the Congress saying that they allowed the SYL survey to take place. "Now, the government is itself allowing the survey."